



Dana E. Blackwell
Executive Director

LOS ANGELES COUNTY COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

COMMISSIONERS:
CAROL O. BIONDI, VICE CHAIR
PATRICIA CURRY
HON. JOYCE FAHEY
PHALEN G. HUREWITZ, ESQ.
HELEN A. KLEINBERG
DAISY MA, VICE CHAIR
DR. LA-DORIS MCCLANEY
SANDRA RUDNICK
ADELINA SORKIN, LCSW/ACSW
DR. HARRIETTE F. WILLIAMS, CHAIR

APPROVED MINUTES

The General Meeting of the Commission for Children and Families was held on Monday, **January 31, 2005**, in room 140 of the Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration, 500 West Temple Street, Los Angeles. **Please note that these minutes are intended as a summary and not as a verbatim transcription of events at this meeting.**

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT (Quorum Established)

Carol O. Biondi
Patricia Curry
Joyce Fahey
Phalen G. Hurewitz
Helen Kleinberg
Sandra Rudnick
Adelina Sorkin
Dr. Harriette Williams

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT (Excused/Unexcused)

Daisy Ma
Dr. La-Doris McClaney

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

The agenda for the January 31, 2005 meeting was unanimously approved.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes for the November 15, 2004 chair's meeting were unanimously approved.
The minutes for the January 10, 2005 general meeting were unanimously approved.

CHAIR'S REPORT:

- The Annual Report was unanimously approved with one amendment submitted by Commissioner Rudnick. Commissioners lauded Ms. Blackwell for a very well written report.
- Chair Williams announced her attendance as the Commission representative at the first meeting of the Education Coordinating Council (ECC). The ECC will be chaired by Jose Huizar, LAUSD President. A significant amount of material was distributed to ECC members and Chair Williams promised to provide Commissioners with a summary of the information in the coming weeks. Additionally, there were several action items that require input and approval from the Commission prior to the next meeting in April. She reminded Commissioners of their responsibilities when representing the Commission on another body. She emphasized the importance of keeping the Commission informed about the issues before the respective bodies so the Commission representative understands the Commission's position should a vote take place.
- Chair Williams confirmed the date of budget meeting with the Department. A meeting confirmation will be sent to all Commissioners. Commissioner Kleinberg asked if materials could be provided prior to the meeting. The Commission agreed to meet prior to the confirmed date with the Department so that consensus could be reached on specific issues. Commissioner Kleinberg asked if the materials could highlight areas in which substantial change has been made from the prior year, particularly in work group areas. Dr. Sanders agreed to send materials ahead of time that would reflect the funding strategies to achieve the goals in the three work group areas with a comparison to the previous year's budget as well as the other funding streams available in the county to augment the Department's efforts. Commissioner Sorkin asked for a breakdown of the MacLaren funds.
- A Chair's meeting will take place prior to the February 7th Commission meeting to discuss a possible presentation to the Board of Supervisors and a report from Commissioner Kleinberg on the work group chair's meeting. Ms. Blackwell indicated that a quorum was necessary and requested the attendance of all Commissioners.
- Chair Williams referenced the invitation to the Commissioners to participate in the Katie A. workgroups. Ms. Blackwell will provide information to Commissioners with the work group meeting schedule.
- The Children's Services Trust Fund presentation has been postponed. Commissioners will be advised when it will be rescheduled.
- Chair Williams asked Commissioners to participate on various committees facilitated by Judge Nash. If Commissioners are not available Ms. Blackwell will attend as her schedule permits.
- Chair Williams announced Commissioner Rudnick's participation on the Safe Haven Task Force II. Vice Chair Biondi indicated that the most recent Children's Planning Council (CPC) ScoreCard Report neglects to reflect the number of youth in the juvenile system, 4, 000 on any given day. Vice Chair Biondi reported that she met with the CPC's Executive Director on this issue and was assured that it was an oversight and that they would seek to amend the report.
- Chair Williams announced her attendance at an upcoming planning meeting for the Town Hall Meetings that are planned to take place across the county. This meeting is a follow-up to a previous meeting sponsored by the CAOs office.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

- Dr. Sanders reported that the Department has focused on improving the quality of the use of the Structured Decision Making (SDM) tool. The tool is being used but the accuracy of the decision making is critical. Of the five tools contained within SDM, the safety assessment is the most important as it determines whether detention of the child is necessary and whether services can be put in place to mitigate the likelihood of abuse. Three days of training for the Assistant Regional Administrators (ARA) was recently completed. Dr. Sanders stated that the goal of the training was to ensure that they are very “conversant” in SDM which he did not believe they were prior to the training. The training included case reviews so that they can randomly review cases in their region to determine how well staff is using the tool. When training initially took place the focus was on the front end assessment tools. As such, the use of the risk reassessment tool is not employed on a consistent basis causing some cases to be open longer than necessary. This most recent training placed focus on the “back end” assessment tools with the expectation that the ARAs will be able to oversee the use of SDM throughout the life of a case.
- Dr. Sanders announced that a Prevention meeting will take place on February 9th. He explained that Casey Family Programs has expressed interest in the county’s prevention initiatives. The goal of the meeting will be to explore current prevention efforts taking place and how Casey might participate in this initiative. In addition to representatives from Casey Family Programs, other community agencies will be present, along with DCFS Regional Administrators, the Service Integration Branch and Commissioner Rudnick.
- Dr. Sanders reported that 13 of the 29 youth who were part of the Department’s P3 program have achieved some form of legal permanence. In reviewing the process, Dr. Sanders stated that the Department’s ability to respond quickly once a family is found is critical. It is his hope that the Department’s response time will be improved for the next 21 children who are part of the program. He again stated that the Department is working to expand the program. Consistent with the Permanency Report, the Department is moving forward with hiring retired CSWs to work in the P3 program. Notices have already been sent out and 80 CSWs have expressed interest. The Children’s Consortium will provide training and 6 regional offices have been identified to have the retirees in their offices. It will ultimately be expanded to all regional offices.
- The rollout of Concurrent Planning will begin in February with the Lakewood office. The Department will track how effective the concurrent planning structure is in reducing timelines to permanency, including reunification.
- Dr. Sanders reported that he has talked with Judge Nash about the visitation recommendations contained within the Family Reunification (FR) report. He further stated that Judge Nash is interested in creating a workgroup with the intent to create protocols for visitation.

Commissioner Kleinberg commented that the SDM tool neglects to assess specifically for drug and alcohol involvement on the part of our families. She further stated the FR report placed great emphasis on the need for after care services and expressed concern that services to families are not prematurely discontinued as a result of the SDM reassessment tools.

Commissioner Sorkin asked if safeguards are in place to ensure services will be available to families immediately after a case plan is developed so as to not delay the timeline to family reunification.

Commissioner Fahey suggested that the Department ensure that appropriate services are in place for those children and families who are part of the P3 program so that the placement does not disrupt. She asked what the Courts role is with respect to SDM, especially at the time of reassessment, suggesting that a meaningful dialogue should take place to ensure that the tool has been employed. Dr. Sanders stated that Judge Nash has requested that the actual tool is included with the court reports. Training will be provided to appropriate court personnel as well as the attorneys.

Commissioner Biondi asked Dr. Sanders about the increase of detentions since the January 3rd child death. Dr. Sanders explained that during the month of January the Department received a record number of calls into the Hotline. Over 800 calls were received on one day. He stated that there was an increase in detentions, but he does not believe there is any correlation to the referenced child death.

NEW BUSINESS

Mental Health Services Act – Proposition 63: Dr. Marvin Southard, Department of Mental Health Director, explained that the estimated funding to be generated by Prop. 63 is approximately \$250 million in fiscal year 2004-05, \$700 million in 2005-06 and increasing amounts thereafter. Los Angeles county has approximately \$80 million remaining for the current fiscal year. Priorities for this fiscal year will be in the areas of capital facilities, technology and education and training. For the following three (3) fiscal years, \$700 -\$800 million each year, will be available to the state with Los Angeles county's portion to be approximately \$200-\$300 million each year. Dr. Southard stated that a three year planning document is required to receive the funds. Required planning components include: systems of care, education, information technology, capital facilities, innovative programs, community program planning and prevention and early intervention services. He anticipates that a plan to fund systems of care will be submitted by late summer or early fall 2005. This category represents 55% of the county's funding allocation. In the years following fiscal year 2007-08 – the end of the first three year plan - the majority of the county's allocation would be put in a required "prudent reserve" as the source of the money is subject to fluxuations in the economy.

Dr. Southard stated that the local planning process is an outgrowth of the budget process DMH employed last year when they anticipated a \$30 million budget shortfall. The process was beneficial and serves as the planning model for these funds. The planning process is focused on outcomes and how to invest the funds to ensure the outcomes. Dr. Southard explained that a delegate process has been created that includes a wide array of stakeholders. Those stakeholders then participate in one of four major work groups – children, adults, older adults and underserved ethnic populations. These work groups are further refined to address specific outcome areas. The work of the groups is focused on desired outcomes for the sub-populations and recommendations for how particular programs will be designed to achieve the stated outcome. Dr. Southard stated that of critical importance to the planning process, for the four major work groups, is a

corresponding planning group at the SPA level to facilitate the planning to meet the needs of particular geographic areas. Ultimately the work of all of the groups will contribute to the creation of one single plan that will be submitted to the state. Prior to submission to the state, a public hearing must take place to receive input and feedback.

Vice Chair Biondi commented that the Commission was not invited to participate in any of the work groups. She did state however that after finding out about the juvenile justice work group she has been in attendance. Vice Chair Biondi believes that the tool designed to capture the recommendations of the work groups is flawed. She expressed her concern that the planning process will not allow for the development of a comprehensive system designed to include community based agencies, evidenced based practices and ultimately address the needs of this population. Dr. Southard clarified that these funds must be spent on mental health services, and it can not be used to supplant existing programs. Commissioner Curry asked for further clarification on the issue of supplanting existing programs and used systems of care as an existing program for which funds will be used. He explained that the state refers to system of care as a concept and not as a program so that previous references were to the concept.

Commissioner Curry also expressed her disappointment and frustration that the Commission was not invited to participate in any of the work groups, especially in light of Dr. Southard's keen knowledge of the Commission's long standing advocacy work to provide dependent children with mental health services. Commissioner Curry asked what consideration is going to be given to the many programs that have not had sufficient funding from DMH and for which the Commission has worked to acquire. Dr. Southard restated that all decisions about what gets funded comes through the stakeholder process and that any Commissioner who would like to participate is welcome. Commissioner Curry asked that a percentage specifically set aside for foster children and that the Commission be a part of planning for that percentage. She went on to enumerate the many program deficient areas present in the foster care system – respite care, wraparound, TBS, START units, mental health staffing, recommendations from the three work groups, adult board and care for emancipating youth. Again, he restated that the planning for the funds will be community driven and encouraged Commission participation.

Commissioner Fahey questioned the rationale of prioritizing the development of an information system to track patients, medications, etc. She stated that it might be more worthwhile to begin utilizing the funds to address the critical shortage of services and programs available in the county. Dr. Southard explained that the first six months of funding is focused of developing infrastructure - 45% of the funds is allocated to capital facilities and technology and 45% on education. With respect to education and training, Dr. Southard stated that there is a shortage of psychiatrists, social workers, and psychiatric nurses, while there are plenty of psychologists. He further stated that the workforce needs the proper mixture of professionals to promote the desired outcomes. Commissioner Fahey questioned whether the technology will include a coordination of available resources throughout the various communities in the county. He responded that this issue is already being addressed. Additionally, a foster care referral hotline is being proposed. The hotline would link foster youth to mental health services. He further commented that the hotline will be implemented on a SPA by SPA basis as implementation issue vary in each SPA. John Hatakeyama stated that SPA 6 has the most comprehensive plan to date with SPA 7 to follow.

Commissioner Sorkin questioned how the work of the Underserved Ethnic Populations work group will be integrated with the work of the other groups, especially considering that most of the children served are ethnic minorities. Dr. Southard agreed and said that it was a design issue, because each work group should plan for that issue. Ethnic communities pushed for such a work group at the state and local level. The work group has not yet begun to meet and he hopes that it may focus on specific issues of specific populations that may not otherwise arise in one of the other three groups. He will provide more information as it becomes available.

Commissioner Hurewitz asked if it was possible to work with the Department to develop a shared data base so that the Department's up front assessments are more comprehensive. Dr. Southard responded that the intent is to develop a system that would technologically allow for the sharing of as much information as possible. What follows of course are the legal hurdles with respect to confidentiality. Upon the advise of Judge Nash, Dr. Southard will be working with County Counsel.

Dr. Southard stated that the Prop. 63 funds are not designed to be a payor source for things that already have funding, such as, Medicaid and Title IVE. He emphasized that this money should be used to pay for those things that do not currently have funding sources. Dr Southard said that if he were to determine how this money was to be spent he would focus on the mental health and substance abuse needs of the parents of dependent and probation youth. This population, he stated are not Medicaid recipients so that there is no payor source for those services. He also believes that the usefulness of the stakeholder process is that it will force a consensus on how best to improve and redesign the system. He apologized for not proactively including the Commission in the early stages of the planning process.

Commissioner Kleinberg asked if representatives from Department of Health Services – Drugs and Alcohol are present in any of the stakeholder groups. She then commented on the need to provide children with mental health services immediately upon detention due to the trauma they experience when separated from their families. She asked if anyone from the Department is represented at each of the stakeholder groups so that there is advocacy for a continuum of care that begins at the very beginning of the process. Dr. Southard stated that DMH and the Department have been working closely throughout this process and they have participated in every relevant decision made thus far. Dr. Jackie Acosta is the Department's delegate. With respect to providing foster youth with mental health services, Dr. Southard stated that Prop 63 will not address that issue because EPSDT is available as the funding source. He went on to state that the problem is that the system is not organized so that services are well coordinated between the providers, DMH and DCFS.

Dr. Acosta stated that DMH has been extremely supportive and involved in the design of a new system that would meet the needs of dependent youth. Together they have been working hard to create a new system that is focused on the mental health needs of children and families throughout the entire continuum by utilizing the expertise of DMH and their getting services to the families in the community. She added that DMH has also been involved in the Katie A. work groups to assist the Department in implementing the agreed upon changes. She did state that there is an EPSDT work group and a work group focused on the needs of parents.

Chair Williams apologized to John Hatakeyama, DMH Deputy Director, for not having enough time to present the service portion of the agenda presentation, but asked if he would return. He responded in the affirmative and suggested that a Commissioner participate on the Children's Workgroup Steering Committee. Chair Williams appointed Commissioner Curry.

Commissioner Curry agreed with Dr. Southard that Prop 63 should not be used when EPSDT is available and stated that over time the Commission has been told that programs such as respite care could not be funded because of a deficit in the funding or that the provision of START services was limited because EPSDT did not cover those services. She suggested that the Prop 63 funding be used to fill those service gaps if in fact there are funding deficits and limitations. Finally, she suggested that the efforts be coordinated with the work group recommendations.

Commissioner Curry recommended that the Commission submit a letter to the BOS with recommendations on the use of Prop 63 funds. Commissioner Fahey questioned issues with regard to utilizing funds to supplant funds. Commissioner Kleinberg suggested that the letter be written after Mr. Hatakeyama presents to the Commission. She further suggested that the Commission consider using a general meeting as a public forum to receive input from the public.

PUBLIC COMMENT

- Brian Thompson and Esther Schiller recommended that the Department look closely at developing a policy to protect children from second hand smoke.
- Jo Kaplan, Esq. stated that the Prop 63 stakeholder process is moving quite slowly and suggested the Commission follow the issue every 60 days on the general meeting calendar to provide oversight and accountability.
- Brenda Parks stated that a small percentage of foster care and kinship families are aware of the services available to them. Additionally, she addressed the lack of mental health services available, as well as access to medication.

MEETING ADJOURNED